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Mr. White file



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COMIREX-M-108
8 October 1970

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NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

COMMITTEE ON IMAGERY REQUIREMENTS AND EXPLOITATION

COMIREX-M-108
8 October 1970

Approved per M-111

[As this was a special meeting, no items were covered under Sections II, III, V, and VI.]

Section I (Briefings)

Page 4 NRO Briefings on Flexibility in Scheduling
Overhead Coverage to Meet Intelligence
Requirements

*See also
COMINT-D-12, 13, 14*

Section IV (Action Items)

Page 7 Review of Imagery Satellite Schedule and
Coverage Prospects, FY 71 and Beyond
(COMIREX-D-14.6/3A)

25X1A



Copy 4 of 68

25X1A



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BRIEFERS

NRO Briefings on Flexibility in Scheduling
Overhead Coverage to Meet Intelligence
Requirements

Capt. Robert Geiger, USN
Col. Frank Hartley

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25X1A

3

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Section I (Briefings)

NRO Briefings on Flexibility in Scheduling Overhead Coverage
to Meet Intelligence Requirements [] TAG;T-KH)

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1. The Chairman announced the principal purpose of today's special meeting is to receive information from the NRO, primarily by way of a special briefing on the present status and potential flexibility in scheduling imagery coverage by satellites, manned aircraft and/or drones to meet intelligence requirements.
2. [] indicated he had provided the Chairman a memorandum covering some of the data required for preparation of the study for USIB (see COMIREX-M-107, page 5, paragraph 4), but had recommended this supplementary briefing to bring the Committee fully up to date on the National Reconnaissance Program's (NRP) present assets, their current status of availability, and to provide a look at some future possibilities.
3. [] briefed first on current satellite systems and some of the options available for their use, particularly in the context of their capabilities and limitations for employment in response to crisis situations.
4. He then reviewed certain candidate systems that have been considered for special crisis use. He noted that, in the absence of a fully developed near-real-time imagery satellite system such as that now under development, various interim, limited-capability systems have been conceived and studied over the past several years for possible application to overhead photo reconnaissance on a quick-response basis.

*See also
COMIREX-D-12, 1571*

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COMIREX-M-108

8 October 1970

After study, the ideas have invariably been discarded for a number of reasons and no formal requirements have ever been established for such an interim system. Further, none of the systems suggested ever satisfactorily met all of the needs expressed. Costs, even of the most inexpensive approach, are still excessive considering the limited potential for coverage and photo-return generally provided by the type of systems studied.

5. All of these interim crisis-oriented systems considered to date can be classed in the following range of performance characteristics. The resolution would vary from four to ten feet. Area coverage would range from 150,000 square nautical miles to 1.3 million square nautical miles. Total coverage capability extends from single-orbit access to daily access of a limited area for up to three weeks. Cost estimates range from about [redacted] nonrecurring, [redacted] recurring, per mission. The only major variation among the systems considered is in their particular mode of responsiveness. In this respect, they fall into three basic categories:

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a. Secondary payloads. These are placed in orbit and maintained in space in a "zombie mode" for future on-call activation (one-year orbit life, three weeks' active life).

b. Aircraft-launched satellites. Airborne platforms employ boosters to place a small satellite vehicle in orbit for a very limited number of accesses to a particular target area of interest (one-day life).

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25X1A

5

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COMIREX-M-108
8 October 1970

25X1A

c. Satellites launched by a "dedicated" booster. Again, the satellite payload is limited to only a few orbits of a particular target area of interest (one-day life).

6. All of these systems use existing hardware and technology and engineering is not considered a problem. Lead times to bring the systems into operation range up to 24 months after the specific community requirement is established and funding authorized.

7. Following Captain Geiger's presentation, Colonel Hartley and [REDACTED] briefed on the current NRP inventory of manned aircraft and drones and their potential for employment to complement satellite coverage in both crisis situations and for satisfaction of standing requirements. Specifically, the current status of the U-2, SR-71, and A-12 aircraft and the TAGBOARD drone were outlined and discussed. It was pointed out that because of various restraints, primarily political and financial, no major new airborne systems had been designed and developed after 1963. Therefore, if it is desirable to maintain the option of supplementing satellites with quick-reaction airborne platforms, current restrictions on their use should be reassessed and requirements to meet future needs for the present or improved systems should be identified and formulated. Colonel Hartley also reviewed certain prospective systems that could be studied further if a community need were expressed and funds made available.

8. It was agreed that the NRO briefing had provided highly useful and pertinent background information for the Committee in preparing its study. The Chairman proposed that specific details on each of the possible candidate systems not be included in the study itself. He would, however, ask

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COMIREX-M-108

8 October 1970

25X1A

the NRO's assistance in formulating text for the study that would refer generally to this category of options and address merely their generic characteristics.

Section IV (Action Items)

Review of Imagery Satellite Schedule and Coverage Prospects, FY 71 and Beyond (COMIREX-D-14.6/3A) [REDACTED]; T-KH)

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1. The Chairman explained that a new draft of the satellite schedule review study would be furnished to members and consultants at the close of today's meeting. It represents largely an amplification of the earlier draft, taking into account the points discussed at last week's meeting. As agreed earlier, the basic text of the report will be in a COMIREX study format, covered by a forwarding memorandum setting forth the conclusions, recommendations and options. Members were asked to notify the Chairman soonest on any recommendations they might have as to ways in which the information can be presented or ordered for easier reading. Their assistance in improving the focus of the study was also sought. The aim is to have the final version provide as complete reference base as possible for understanding the present program and the flow of satellite imagery, as well as the outlook for coverage during FY 71 and beyond.

2. The Chairman asked members to provide their views as to the general conclusions to be drawn from the data reviewed in the study. He would now be turning to the initial drafting of these conclusions and a text for the covering memorandum which will focus on the primary issues and, in effect, constitute the Committee's direct response to Dr. Cline's

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COMIREX-M-108
8 October 1970

25X1A

memorandum (see COMIREX-M-106, pages 11 and 12).

[] cited the following as points he would consider for emphasis in the conclusions. It appears clear, for example, that with respect to the immediate future--the balance of FY 71--the circumstances of the satellite launch schedule as presently fixed virtually eliminate any options for improved flexibility. Crisis response capability in this period would be solely in the area of supplemental platforms (manned aircraft and/or drones). Even after [] is operational, flexibility for providing satellite coverage to meet a particular situation will remain quite limited, although general search coverage and surveillance of strategic targets such as ICBM sites should be much improved. The report must make clear that even were a requirement to provide some interim capability for crisis coverage established today, considerable time will be required, some 24 months' minimum, before such a system could become operational.

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3. Members were asked to review the new draft materials and inform the Chairman of their views on the format and content as well as suggestions on what should be included in the cover memorandum. Another working meeting on the paper will be scheduled next week.

[]

Executive Secretary

Committee on Imagery Requirements and Exploitation

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